

# Introduction

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Just hours before midnight this past December 31, I celebrated the receipt of an email from a dear friend of mine in Europe. How good it was to see his “Happy New Year 2010” on the screen! He went on to write, however, that it is a sad state of affairs when, rather than a human voice, or even a human script, it is an electronic mail that conveys such well wishes. Perhaps I would once have considered his comment nostalgic, something akin to Heidegger’s lament of the overtaking of manuscripture, in its essential bond to speech, by the typewriting machine. Yet, after reading my friend’s message, I took from the shelf a book he recently published and sent me—inscribed in his-only script. And I recalled my find earlier that same New Year’s Eve of a precious scrap of paper signed in my now-dead father’s hand.

In lieu of a telephone call, an email, a scrap of paper, or—as is the case in the *Brokeback Mountain* texts, Annie Proulx’s 1997 short story and Ang Lee’s 2005 film—a postcard. “Postcards are phenomenological objects *par excellence*,” Andrea Fitzpatrick writes in the first essay in this issue, “because condensed within their small, flat, paper borders are the legacies of geographic distances travelled by the postcards and the hands through which they have been passed. Postcards capture the touch of the lover’s hand in the penmanship and the dried saliva under the stamp,” and in *Brokeback Mountain*, they establish an “erotic, haptic contact” between the separated lovers, Ennis del Mar and Jack Twist. Fascinated with postcards herself, Annie Proulx (whose 1997 novel is titled *Postcards*), uses the postcard in *Brokeback Mountain* as what Fitzpatrick, following Roland Barthes, calls a “figure of affect.” At once erotically charged and coded in a private language, the postcards sent between Ennis and Jack are framed “tersely and secretly,” Fitzpatrick observes, “without giving anything away to a third party into whose hands they might fall.” As Jacques Derrida puts this point in *The Postcard*—where, among other things, he explores the relation between falling in love and the *carte*—the postcard, as cryptic as every inscription, is

both open and illegible. Indeed, one could read *The Postcard*, as well as Barthes's *Camera Lucida* and *A Lover's Discourse*, alongside Proulx's short story, the latter as a theoretically astute and beautiful written analysis of love and the letter. Proulx knows as well as Barthes that, while offering an immediacy, a palpable contact between writer and reader, the postcard, like the photograph, also, in Fitzpatrick's words, "signals the lover's absence (the mail object is present because the lover is away)." And Proulx knows as well as Derrida that the postcard can always not arrive at its destination, that the absence of the other includes the idea of death—Ennis's postcard to Jack returning with the stamp, *Deceased*.

This is a *Mosaic* issue rich in such intertextual, literary and critical—music, film, phonography, photography, cartography—interconnections. You will learn from it as much as you will enjoy it.

Please be reminded to check the *Mosaic* website for regular news on our upcoming (6-9 October 2010) international, interdisciplinary conference, "Freud After Derrida."

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#### WORKS CITED

Derrida, Jacques. *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.